

FAREWELL TO AMERICA
HENRY W. NEVINSON .

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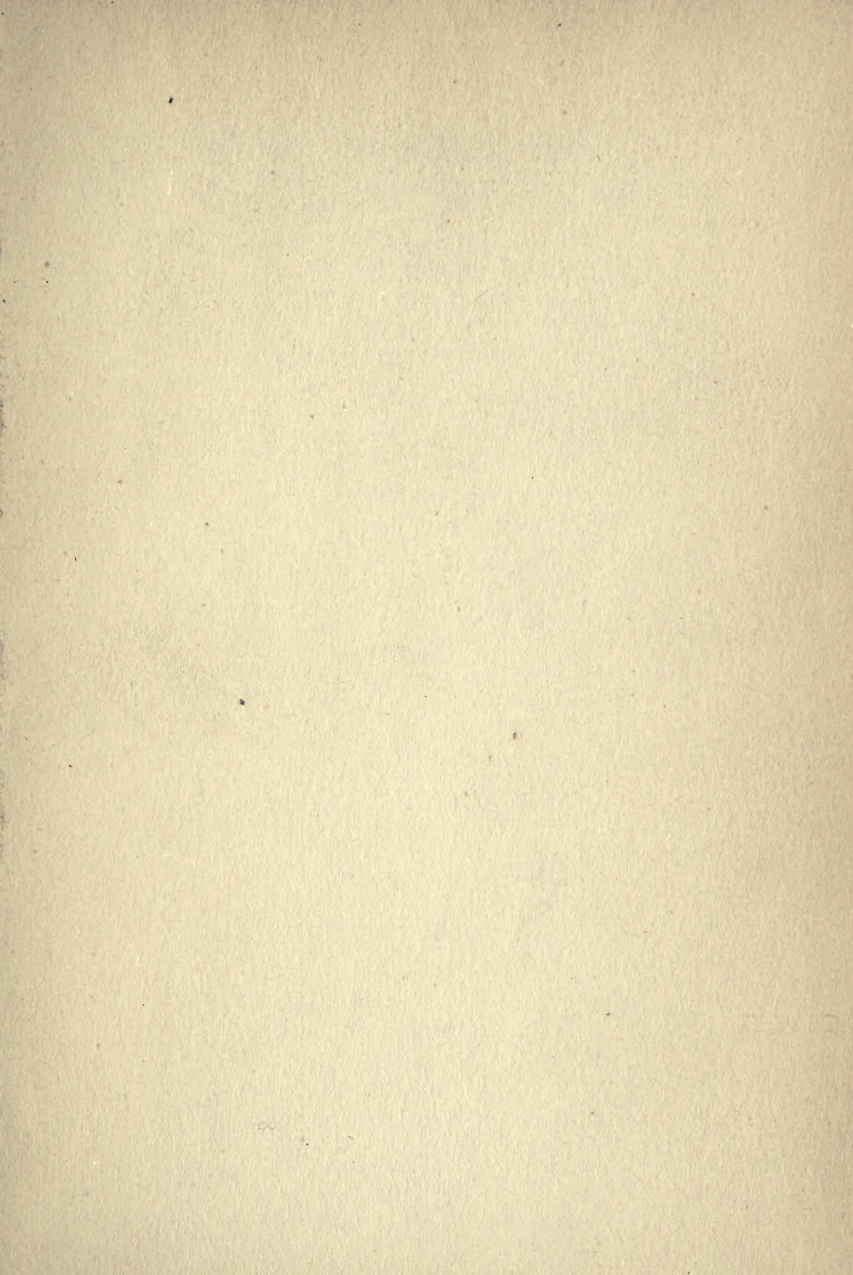
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FAREWELL TO AMERICA

IN mist and driving snow the towers of New York fade from view. The great ship slides down the river. Already the dark, broad seas gloom before her. Good-bye, most beautiful of modern cities! Good-bye to glimmering spires and lighted bastions, dreamlike as the castles and cathedrals of a romantic vision though mainly devoted to commerce and finance! Good-bye to thin films of white steam that issue from central furnaces and flit in dissolving wreaths around those precipitous heights! Good-bye to heaven-piled offices, so clean, so warm, where lovely stenographers, with silk stockings and powdered faces, sit leisurely at work or converse in charming

ease! Good-bye, New York! I am going home. I am going to an ancient city of mean and mouldering streets, of ignoble coverts for mankind, extended monotonously over many miles; of grimy smoke clinging closer than a blanket; of smudgy typists who know something of powder but little of silk, and less of leisure and charming ease. Good-bye, New York! I am going home.

GOOD-BYE to beautiful "apartments" and "homes"! Good-bye to windows looking far over the city as from a mountain peak! Good-bye to central heating and radiators, fit symbols of the hearts they warm! Good-bye to frequent and well-appointed bath-rooms, the glory of America's art! Good-bye to suburban gardens running into each other without hedge or fence to separate friend from friend or enemy from enemy! Good-bye to shady verandahs where rocking chairs stand ranged in rows, ready for reading the voluminous Sunday papers and the "Saturday Evening Post"! Good-bye, America! I am going home. I am going to a land where every man's house is his prison—a land of open fires and chilly rooms and frozen water-pipes, of washing-stands and slop-pails, and one bath per household at the most; a land of fences and hedges and walls, where

people sit aloof, and see no reason
to make themselves seasick by rock-
ing upon shore. Good-bye, Amer-
ica! I am going home.

GOOD-BYE to the copious meals—the early grape-fruit, the “cereals,” the eggs broken in a glass! Good-bye to oysters, large and small, to celery and olives beside the soup, to “sea food,” to sublimated viands, to bleeding duck, to the salad course, to the “individual pie” or the thick wedge of apple pie, to the invariable slab of ice-cream, to the coffee, also bland with cream, to iced water and home-brewed alcohol! I am going to the land of joints and roots and solid pudding; the land of ham-and-eggs and violent tea; the land where oysters are good for suicides alone, and where cream is seldom seen; the land where mustard grows and whisky flows. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

GOOD-BYE to the long stream of motors—"limousines" or "flivvers"! Good-bye to the signal lights upon Fifth Avenue, gold, crimson, and green; the sudden halt when the green light shines, as though at the magic word an enchanted princess had fallen asleep; the hurried rush for the leisurely lunch at noon, the deliberate appearance of hustle and bustle in business, however little is accomplished, the Jews, innumerable as the Red Sea sand! Good-bye to outside staircases for escape from fire! Good-bye to scrappy suburbs littered with rubbish of old boards, tin pails, empty cans, and boots! Good-bye to standardized villages and small towns, alike in litter, in ropes of electric wires along the streets, in clanking "trolleys," in chapels, stores, railway stations, Main Streets, and isolated wooden houses flung at random over the country-side. Good-bye to miles of

advertisement imploring me in ten-foot letters to eat somebody's cod fish ("No Bones!"), or smoke somebody's cigarettes ("They Satisfy!") or sleep with innocence in the "Faultless Nightgown"! Good-bye to the long trains where one smokes in a lavatory, and sleeps at night upon a shelf screened with heavy green curtains and heated with stifling air, while over your head or under your back a baby yells and the mother tosses moaning, until at last you reach your "stopping-off place," and a semi-negro sweeps you down with a little broom, as in a supreme rite of unction! Good-bye to the house that is labelled "One Hundred Years Old," for the amazement of mortality! Good-bye to thin woods, and fields enclosed with casual pales, old hoops, and lengths of wire! I am going to a land of the policeman's finger, where the horse and the bicycle still drag out a lingering life; a land of

persistent and silent toil; a land of old villages and towns as little like each other as one woman is like the next; a land where trains are short, and one seldom sleeps in them, for in any direction within a day they will reach a sea; a land of vast and ancient trees, of houses time-honored three centuries ago, of cathedrals that have been growing for a thousand years, and of village churches built while people believed in God. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

GOOD-BYE to the land of a new language in growth, of split infinitives and cross-bred words; the land where a dinner-jacket is a "Tuxedo," a spittoon a "Cuspidor"; where your opinion is called your "reaction," and where "vamp," instead of meaning an improvised accompaniment to a song, means a dangerous female! Good-bye to the land where grotesque exaggeration is called humor, and people gape in bewilderment at irony, as a bullock gapes at a dog straying in his field! Good-bye to the land where strangers say "Glad to meet you, sir," and really seem glad; where children incessantly whine and wail their little desires, and never grow much older; where men keep their trousers up with belts that run through loops, and women have to bathe in stockings. I am going to a land of ancient speech, where we still say "record" and "concord" for "recud"

and "conclud"; where "unnecessarily" and "extraordinarily" must be taken at one rush, as hedge-ditch-and-rail in the hunting field; where we do not "commute" or "check" or "page," but "take a season" and "register" and "send a boy round"; where we never say we are glad to meet a stranger, and seldom are; where humor is understatement, and irony is our habitual resource in danger or distress; where children are told they are meant to be seen and not heard; where it is "bad form" to express emotion, and suspenders are a strictly feminine article of attire. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

GOOD-BYE to the multitudinous papers, indefinite of opinion, crammed with insignificant news, and asking you to continue a first-page article on page 23 column 5! Good-bye to the weary platitude, accepted as wisdom's latest revelation! Good-bye to the docile audiences that lap rhetoric for sustenance! Good-bye to politicians contending for aims more practical than principles! Good-bye to Republicans and Democrats, distinguishable only by mutual hatred! Good-bye to the land where Liberals are thought dangerous, and Radicals show red! Where Mr. Gompers is called a Socialist, and Mr. Asquith would seem advanced! A land too large for concentrated indignation; a land where wealth beyond the dreams of British profiteers dwells, dresses, gorges, and luxuriates, emulated and unashamed! I am going to a land of politics violently divergent; a land where even

Coalitions cannot coalesce; where meetings break up in turbulent disorder, and no platitude avails to soothe the savage breast; a land fierce for personal freedom, and indignant with rage for justice; a land where wealth is taxed out of sight, or for very shame strives to disguise its luxury; a land where an ancient order of feudal families is passing away, and—Labour leaders whom Wall Street would shudder at are hailed by Lord Chancellors as the very fortifications of security. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

GOOD-BYE to prose chopped up to look like verse! Good-bye to the indiscriminating appetite which gulps lectures as opiates, and "printed matter" as literature! Good-bye to the wizards and witches who claim to psycho-analyze my complexes, inhibitions, and silly dreams! Good-bye to the exuberant religious or fantastic beliefs by which unsatisfied mankind still strives desperately to penetrate beyond the flaming bulwarks of the world! Good-bye, Americans! I am going to your spiritual home.

February, 1922.

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